

New Castle ~~Old~~ Court House, Old
New Castle, Delaware

HABS No. Del-80

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Delaware

Historic American Buildings Survey
Weston H. Blake, District Officer
909 West Street, Wilmington, Delaware

OLD COURT HOUSE
New Castle, New Castle County, Delaware

Owner: State of Delaware, but in the hands of Trustees of the Market Square, New Castle.

Date of Erection: Small original building about 20' X 20' approximately 1680. Added East end and completing East wing some years later. Central portion 1701-4. West wing completed in 1845.

Architect and Builder: Unknown

Present Condition: Not so good. The stucco which covered the masonry was removed during 1936. Repairs and restoration, adequately and understandingly done at the earliest possible date, are imperative, especially as to foundations and fire risks.

Number of Stories: Two, with ample loft in center pavilion.

Materials of Construction: Stone foundation and brick walls in older portions with timber joists, roof framing and floors. In 19th Century work, brick arches, stone floors and masonry stairs were used to insure the preservation of records. Tin roofs replace the earlier shingles. The cupola is frame construction. The West wing may be considered fireproof.

Other Existing Records: Levy Court Records; All Histories of Delaware; Bennett's Early Architecture of Delaware; New Castle on the Delaware; Map Drawings and Elevation of New Castle Streets and Houses in 1804 (original in New Castle County Recorder of Deeds Office).

Additional Data: This uniquely interesting building, the oldest of its kind used continuously in the United States, has many architectural features peculiar to itself. It is not the product of one mind or generation, but an architectural development of over a century and a half, resulting eventually in a general but not exact symmetry. This is not altogether to be regretted, but it increases the difficulties of restoration. Especially is this so, when it is remembered that the court house had an organic connection with the jails, sheriff's houses and jail yards. These latter buildings were changed, rebuilt and torn down along with the varying uses and development of the court house itself. These changes are too numerous to

detail here, only to mention in this general way.
However, comment must be made of the exterior stucco, which, removed in 1936, had been a protective covering for about a century. It had concealed the architectural features in many cases and prevented the study of the various changes, but it had unified the appearance of the building. At present the different building operations are clearly apparent and this adds to the interest and picturesqueness of the structure, but detracts from the general harmony.

Laussat R. Rogers.

Approved

Herbert H. Blake
District Officer

Rev. Jan 21.37 TRW